

quit your present job as a long-distance operator.
You tell them that you want more exposure, not mentioning
that
just standing in lighted windows at night is no longer
enough.

You don't tell them about the restroom incident, or
what you
like to do at the public library, between the rows of
books.
When you told your mother that you were getting a job in
show
business, you didn't say that you would have to show
everything.

"You realize that this club is run by organized crime,"
they
tell you. To this you know you have the right response:
"Organized
or not," you say, "we're all criminals underneath our
clothes."
You remember your deep religious training and convictions.

You've always been fond of the doctrine of original sin.
They look at each other without saying anything else.
You unzip your jeans, and slide them down to show your
perfect thighs.
You feel alright now. "O.K., kid," they say, "show us
what you've got."

TO A SERIOUS EDITOR

I want to disappoint you. I don't mean that I want to,
but I probably will. If you are looking for what
they call
the "well-crafted poem," then I know I will disappoint
you.

I am a poet of the cheap effect and the dirty joke,
the elbow in the ribs and the slap on the ass. If
you are
a woman, then I would rather be squeezing your tits
than
writing this. If you are a man, I would rather be
sitting
with you in a downtown bar, watching a topless dancer.

But here I am, and if you think the things I'm saying
are stupid,
that's your problem, not mine. I know there are a lot
of mistakes
in my poems. But don't wait around for me to fix
them up.

It might be possible to write a good poem without mistakes. But really great poetry always has mistakes in it -- it almost has to. Look at all the mistakes in Shakespeare; look at the mistakes in Ezra Pound. But we're not talking about great poetry anyway. I know this isn't a great poem.

I don't know if you've ever printed a great poem in your magazine or not -- I know you've printed a lot of good ones. If this is a good poem, then it might be good because of its mistakes, not in spite of them. What do you think of that? In any case, you probably won't learn much from reading it. I would rather make people laugh than make them understand. Sooner or later, we all have to realize that it takes more courage to be an entertainer than a teacher.

Poetry is about nothing if not about courage. I don't want to be your teacher. What could you learn from me?

Look at yourself, reading this poem through binoculars, while the house next door is being demolished by vandals, your wife is getting undressed in the back of a taxi cab, your husband is letting down his pants in front of school children, someone is trying to paint your shrubbery with silver paint, and an evil hunchback is building robots in your cellar.

And you think that I can teach you anything? If you look down right now, you will see that a tarantula is crawling across your foot, and your other foot is stuck in the waste basket. I can't teach you anything more than that. I might be able to teach you about the fine hairs that curl along the crease of your daughter's ass, but if you loved her as much as I do, you would already know about that. I am going to marry her as soon as possible, with or without your consent.

I have already promised to let her tie me up in bed. And so this poem, as bad as it is, is all I have to give. I know that it won't make the world any better, no poem will.

Anyone who really wanted to make the world better would not be writing poems; he would sneak an aphrodisiac into the water supply. But here I am writing poems. So don't take this seriously; please don't take it seriously.

Just laugh at me, god damn it, laugh, that's all I want from you.